

# The Mighty Pen “Keyboard” Strikes

## By Joseph P. Guzzo



I have written many articles over the years. I have received many compliments, some disagreements, and a few of what I call, silent criticisms. But the one article that has seemed to get the most attention is also the one I am most proud of. Because two years after it was first published, actual positive results are now starting to show.

The article **“Friday Night Lights Out”** was first published in the Insider in November of 2006. It tells a story about the lack of proper and adequate toilet facilities for High School Stadiums. Prior to writing the article I had been dealing with the very problem at the High School Stadium in my Town. I did some research and some comparisons to other Cities and Towns. My conclusion was that we had a regulation that for the most part was being ignored. I needed to know why. It seemed that apathy, ignorance, false beliefs, including the miss-use of portable toilets, and in some cases deception, has left many of our High School Stadiums without proper and adequate toilet facilities as required by code.

Recently the issue has made headline news in the major newspapers. One article brought to the attention new High Schools being built in Bridgewater-Raynham and Woburn. The article was very critical about the enforcement of the code, alluding to the schools having to choose library books and computers over toilet rooms. As if the students would now get a sub-standard education because toilet facilities are required for the stadium. The cost of the new school in Bridgewater-Raynham is 71 million dollars - a 71 million dollar school surrounded by porta-potties? The article was also critical that the number of fixtures required under table #1 was excessive. And making a comparison that high school stadiums would have to adhere to the same code as Gillette Stadium, stating that high school stadiums are nothing more than a field, track, and a few dozen aluminum benches.

So let me get this straight. It’s OK for stadiums like Gillette to abide by the code and provide proper and adequate toilet facilities for all the fans. Yet all those attending a high school stadium somehow don’t really need toilet facilities, and are relegated to walk long distances even drive to a legitimate bathroom, or forced to use a lovely porta-pottie. And those few aluminum benches... in reality the average population for a high school stadium is 6,000 people. And due to the increase in popularity of high school football, many stadiums across the country are full. They even made a movie and television series about it, hence the title of my first article.

As far as the number of fixtures being excessive, that is what the variance process is for. The Plumbing Board commonly grants variances for a wide range of code requirements, including lesser amount of plumbing fixtures as long as it is reasonable. I obtained a variance for lesser amount of fixtures for my high school stadium, as did the City of Woburn. But even after Woburn was granted a variance some still complained, mostly politicians and in this case the architect. The truth is the architect simply refused to admit they made a mistake. Instead they ranted and raved, apprised politicians, and tried in vein to discredit the Plumbing Inspector, and The Plumbing Board.

The article also quotes a politician, ***“you could have 10 different lawyers read that section and come up with 10 different interpretations.”*** Here is a fact. A boatload of lawyers interpretations mean nothing, the architects interpretations mean nothing, and the opinions of all the politicians you can muster mean absolutely nothing. The only interpretation that matters is that of the local Plumbing Inspector. If there is a disagreement the code provides a process. You may either appeal the inspector’s decision, or request a variance. Ultimately the Plumbing Board shall make the final decision.

I wrote an article that drew attention to a serious problem. But I certainly am not going to take all the credit for bringing this issue to light, for there are many fine Plumbing Inspectors that understand and enforce the code. Unfortunately, there are just as many that don’t. This is why I shall continue to urge all Plumbing Inspectors to insist on being involved in the plan review process. It is your job and responsibility to approve plans prior to the issuance of a building permit. And never rely on an architect’s interpretation. Proper and adequate toilet facilities are the foundation of our code to *“Protect the Health of the Nation.”*

I shall thank the Plumbing Board again for holding firm, and not caving in to pressure brought on by people that simply do not understand the basic intent of our code.

Yes, the pen is mightier that the sword. But what is mightier the pen? Knowledge, go get some.